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ABSTRACT

This exploratory field study involved ten weeks of intensive observations and interviews with four inner city teachers. The initial focus was on exploring heuristic and practical advantages that could ensue when teachers have professional "confidants" (other professionals with whom to frankly discuss personal experiences and concerns of teaching). Data analysis consisted of a thorough inductive analysis of field notes, interview transcripts, and the investigator's personal journal. The results included tentative conclusions on the feasibility and possible implications of a confidant approach to teacher development, including unexpected findings relative to the practice of staff development and the preparation of staff development personnel. (Author)

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT IN A CONFIDANT RELATIONSHIP

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PROBLEM

The initial focus of this exploratory study was:

> What happens when teachers have opportunities to discuss teaching with another educator whom they believe understands their situations, experiences and concerns?

A field investigation was conducted in which teachers were observed and had opportunities to discuss their teaching lives. Patterns and themes extracted from initial data analysis led to more focused research questions.

I. Can a confidant relationship provide a feasible means for facilitating teacher development?

   A. Can a teacher and another educator achieve a confidant relationship?

      1. Do teachers increasingly engage in disclosure of personal concerns and experiences when discussing professionally relevant circumstances and events?

      2. Do teachers' discussions reflect different awarenesses and understandings over time?

   B. What consequences ensue for teachers who participate in discussions of teaching experiences and personal concerns with another educator?

II. What other kinds of data, which have implications for staff development, become available when teachers have opportunities to discuss teaching experiences and personal concerns with another educator?

PROCEDURES

Four white female teachers from an inner city junior high school were informed of the purposes of the study and agreed to participate. The school was selected because it resembled a setting in which the investigator had taught for five years. The investigator assumed that the teachers would feel free to discuss teaching experiences if they believed that the investigator had worked in a similar setting.

Prior to fieldwork and interviews, the general problem involved identifying and establishing conditions that might permit teachers to disclose

teaching experiences and concerns. One condition involved the presence of an interested and trusted listener. The investigator assumed that teachers would perceive a good listener to be:

- a person who was an experienced teacher in a similar setting
- a student of teacher education who planned to embark on a career of pre- and inservice teacher education
- a person who approached teacher observations and interviews in a non-evaluative manner.

Another factor assumed crucial to the success of the investigation was that teachers would accept, i.e. believe, a straight-forward presentation of the investigator's experiences, interests and intentions.

The investigator studied counseling literature on self-disclosure in order to develop understandings of procedures reliably known to facilitate self-disclosure in dyadic settings. Thus, literature on counseling and psychotherapy influenced formulation of the problem and procedures. However, this study was not intended to involve counseling on personal matters, nor did the investigator assume that he was a trained and competent counselor.

The study involved a ten-week fieldwork phase. The fieldwork consisted of classroom observations, naturally occurring discussions, and six tape-recorded discussions with teachers. A seventh interview was given six weeks after the fieldwork.

During the fieldwork phase, the investigator observed teachers two to six hours per week, and kept fieldnotes on observations and informal discussions. The interviews were loosely structured in order to enable teachers to discuss personal experiences and concerns with teaching. The interviews were intended to involve a minimum of investigator directiveness, although the investigator had questions prepared for each interview. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The investigator kept

a personal journal throughout the fieldwork phase. He was interviewed twice by colleagues in order to keep pace with his personal presuppositions, feelings, and development, as well as his influence on the teachers and the investigation process.

DATA ANALYSIS

During and subsequent to the fieldwork, the investigator explored the data in search of naturally occurring patterns and themes. Also, he explored data-generated hunches in the literature on organizational change and development, inservice teacher education, and instructional supervision. The specific research questions supra emerged from the fieldwork and literature search. These were designed to address the feasibility and possible consequences of self-disclosure (confidant relationships) as a teacher development strategy.

The feasibility of confidant relationships as a strategy to facilitate teacher development was addressed by analysis of teacher discussions. The purpose was to ascertain whether teachers:

- engaged in self-disclosure when discussing professional matters
- created new realizations
- identified consequences of the relationships that might have value for teacher development.

Teacher discussions were analyzed to determine whether they discussed teaching matters; topics of discussion were culled from transcripts. The "Haymes (1969) Technique for Measuring Self-Disclosure from Tape-Recorded Interviews" was applied to each transcript to assess the extent of teacher self-disclosure.[1] Newly expressed realizations were culled from the data

[1] Haymes, M. "Haymes (1969) Technique for Measuring Self-Disclosure from Tape-Recorded Interviews," described in Sidney M. Jourard, Self-Disclosure: An Experimental Analysis of the Transparent Self (New York, 1969), PP.216-218.

with reference to the following criteria:

- the teacher made direct statements that she had or was experiencing a new awareness, thought or concern
- the teacher made paralinguistic expressions that indicated realizations, and these expressions were evident on tape and/or transcript
- comparison of teacher discussions across interviews showed newly expressed awarenesses or more extensive awareness, or new thoughts, ideas or concerns
- teacher statements indicating that the teacher had reflected on teaching, and that reflection had contributed to different awarenesses, thoughts, concerns.

Consequences included newly expressed realizations and direct teacher statements of outcomes.

It was assumed that moderate and/or increasing self-disclosure during discussions of professional matters would indicate that confidant relationships were being achieved. Realizations and consequences that teachers valued were assumed to indicate the worthwhileness of confidant relationships. Finally, the achievement of confidant relationships with worthwhile consequences was assumed to indicate that:

- teachers and another educator can achieve confidant relationships
- confidant relationships can provide a feasible means for facilitating teacher development.

The other major question concerned the kinds of data that can be available when teachers have opportunities to engage in candid discussions of their teaching. Two kinds of data resulted from analysis of transcripts, fieldnotes, and the investigator's personal journal:

- data on teachers' personal concerns, beliefs, and experiences
- data on the role and experience of the investigator-as-staff-developer.

A brief presentation of the data follows.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Self-Disclosure Scores

Self-disclosure scores for each interview had a possible range of 0.00 to 2.00. Teachers self-disclosed at moderate to moderately high rates (Table A). Table B shows an increase in self-disclosure for three of the teachers and a decrease for one, if the seventh interview (given six weeks subsequent to the investigation) is discounted.[2]

Figure A shows the range of teacher deviations in self-disclosure. There was an inverse relationship of self-disclosure mean to variance. Teachers who disclosed more varied less in their disclosure rates across interviews. That is, high disclosers were more consistent in their rates of self-disclosure.

Figure B shows a common pattern of within teacher variance in self-disclosure: relatively high disclosure during the first and fifth interviews, and lower disclosure during the others.

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[2] It is understood that this is a crude use and presentation of statistical data. It is meant to demonstrate that teachers did self-disclose and that there were patterns to self-disclosure. A more sophisticated instrument for measuring self-disclosure is needed before sophisticated statistical analysis can be applied appropriately.

TABLE A: Discussion Topics and Self-Disclosure Scores

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Alice	1.5714 Desegregation Administration/ Staff Students Self-as-teacher Project	1.3548 An Incident at School Pattern Observed in Alice's teaching	1.2235 Teacher Education Administration/ Staff Students Colleague/Friend Self-as-teacher Project	1.6032 Incident discussed in Int. 2 Teacher education Administration/ Staff (expectations) Students (expectations) Colleague/Friend Self-as-teacher	1.6349 Students Fights Colleague/Friend Self-as-teacher Project	1.1290 Administration/ Staff Colleague/Friend Self-as-teacher Project's Influence Similiar Project for Inservice Education	1.2676 Schooling (Gen'l.) Next Year Self-as-Teacher Project's Influence Similar Project for Inservice Education
Barbi	1.2046 Administration/ Staff Students Self-as-teacher Project Questions	1.1379 Teacher Education Administration/ Staff Other Project Participants Students Duties Colleague/Friend Self-as-teacher	.875 Administration/ Staff Other Project Participants Colleague/Friend Students Incident in Classroom Self-as-teacher	1.2973 Desegregation Possibility of a Transfer Others' Expectations Self-as-teacher Field Trips	1.4821 Incident discussed in 3rd Interview Administration/ Staff Self-as-teacher Pet Students Next Year Project	Ruined Tape	1.0337 Barbi's summer job Next Year Project Similar Project for Inservice Education Teacher Education Admin./Staff Colleague/Friend Self-as-teacher
Carol	1.0750 Teacher Education Administration/ Staff Parents/Community Students Self-as-teacher Project	.7125 Teacher Education Teachers in General The System Teacher Cutbacks Administration/ Staff Parents/ Community Students Self-as-teacher	.7742 Teacher Education Teacher Certification Students Ideal Teaching Situation Self	.8219 Expression of Frustrations	1.4918 The System Desegregation Administration/ Staff Students Track Team Self-as-teacher	.9194 Teacher Education & Certification The System Desegregation This School Year Parents/Community Administration/ Staff Self-as-teacher Project Similar Project in Her Future	.7604 Elsewhere Teacher Education Self-image of Teachers Self-as-teacher Project Similar Project in Her Future
Dana	1.5000 Students Administration/ Staff Self-as-teacher Project	.5473 Teacher Education Students Duties Self-as-teacher	.7073 Teacher Education Desegregation Administration/ Staff (Task Force) Students Other's Expectations Self-as-teacher	.7500 Teacher Education Students Administration/ Staff Other's Expectations Ideal Teaching Situation Self-as-teacher	1.1364 General view of "Teacher" Self-as-teacher Project	.6296 Teacher Education Students Self-as-teacher Project	.8133 Teacher Education School/Administration/Staff Students Self-as-teacher Project

TABLE B

Increase in Self-Disclosure

	A Self-Disclosure Mean for Interviews 1-3	B Self-Disclosure Mean for Interviews 4-6	B^1 Self-Disclosure Mean for Interviews 4-7	$\frac{B}{A} - 1$	$\frac{B^1}{A} - 1$
Alice	1.3832	1.4557	1.4087	+ 5.24 %	+ 1.84 %
Barbi	1.0725	1.3897	1.2710	+29.58 %	+18.51 %
Carol	.8539	1.0777	.9984	+25.42 %	+16.92 %
Dana	.9182	.8387	.8323	- 8.66 %	- 9.35 %
TOTAL	1.057	1.1905	1.1276	+12.63 %	+ 6.68 %

$\frac{B}{A} - 1$ = Percentage change in self-disclosure between the means of Interviews 1-3 and 4-6.

10 $\frac{B^1}{A} - 1$ = Percentage change in self-disclosure between the means of Interviews 1-3 and 4-7.

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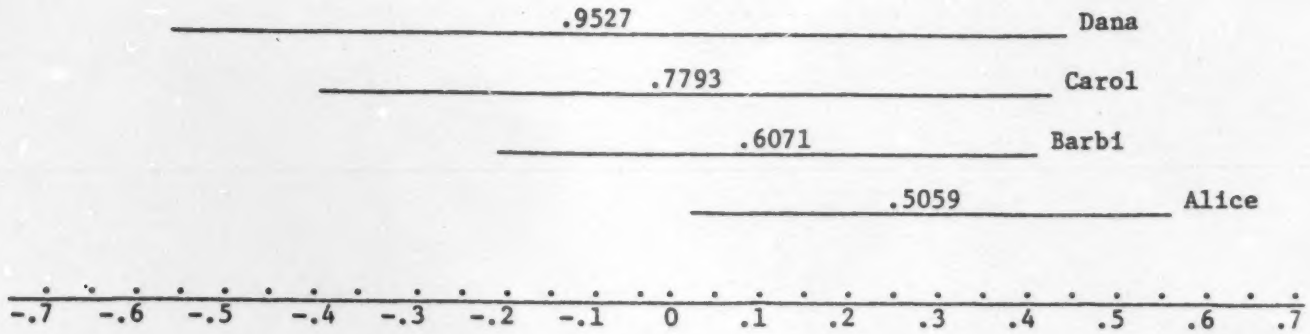
FIGURE A

Range of Teacher Disclosure Score Deviations from Group Mean

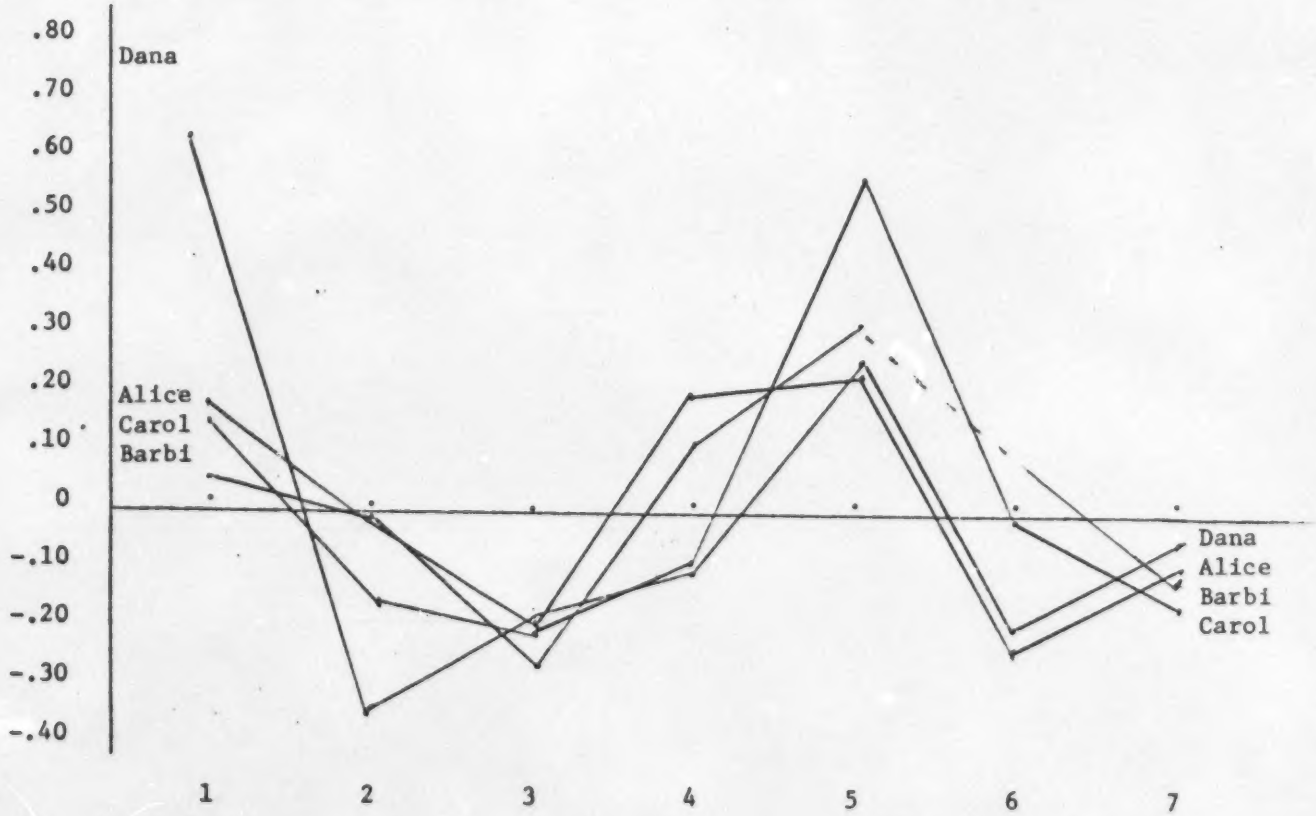


Let Group Mean = 0

Mean Self-Disclosure Scores: Alice = 1.3977 Carol = .9365
Barbi = 1.1718 Dana = .8691

FIGURE B

Within Teacher Variability on Measures of Self-Disclosure



NEWLY EXPRESSED REALIZATIONS

Realizations were first grouped as closely as possible to the meanings they had for each teacher. Realizations were then categorized at a more general level to allow comparison across teachers. This resulted in six general kinds of realizations, those involving: self-awareness and understanding, awareness of circumstances, personal concerns, personal accomplishments, personal appreciations and anticipations.

- Self-awareness and understanding included teacher identification and/or clarification of feelings and moods, assumptions and beliefs, attitudes, her own activities, perceptions of personal changes, awareness of her influence on others, and of how others influenced her.

- Awareness of circumstances involved identification and/or clarification of factors involved in school conditions and events.

- Personal concerns were those concerns identified by teachers as having influenced their professional activities and experiences. These primarily involved factors that teachers felt should be kept at or changed to a desirable state.

- Personal accomplishments involved outcomes that teachers valued and perceived to result from their efforts.

- Personal appreciations involved teacher enjoyment, admiration, or feelings of "worthwhilement" of objects, ideas, processes, or persons.

- Anticipations were teacher images of conditions that could become realities.

Summary statements were made on each teacher's realizations relative to the six categories. The statements provided a basis for comparison across teachers.

SELF-AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

ALICE

- frequently identified feelings or moods that influenced or resulted from events
- frequently reflected on and attempted to clarify beliefs in order to acquire a clear and reasonable perspective
- tried to keep pace with her experiences and attitudes in order to maintain positive & realistic orientation to her role and responsibilities
- maintained sensitivity to mutual influence she and students had on each other
- felt responsible for having positive effects on student learning and self-esteem

BARBI

- aware that her feelings, mood, and attitude were generally negative
- attributed her negativeness to school circumstances and feelings of ineffectiveness or possible incompetence
- aware of embarrassment of what she felt observer perceived to be her failures
- aware that she lacked motivation to improve teaching even though she felt somewhat guilty about her performance
- aware that her resumption of smoking and frequent headaches might be signs of strained emotional health
- aware that changing her associates led to improved experience
- aware that she made decisions based on the kinds of frustration that she thought might result from particular actions

CAROL

- expressed frustrations
- aware of her hurt and bitterness about teacher cutbacks and intra-staff conditions
- aware that she was anxious about her future, and that the anxiety was greater because she was unclear on what the future held
- aware that she probably disclosed more to investigator under these difficult conditions than she would have under normal circumstances

DANA

- delineated awareness of frustrations
- aware of how she coped with circumstances
- aware of how she coped with her emotions
- aware of student expectations of her
- aware that most students responded well to her
- aware that she began to look forward to seeing some students and that she even enjoyed several students
- aware of a difference between herself as teacher under normal circumstances versus being a teacher at AJH

AWARENESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES

ALICE

- no phone in one student's family impeded her effectiveness in working with him
- her husband, children and neighbor became tired of hearing her discussion of school matters and concerns
- the bureaucracy of the school system and AJH seemed to be the root of the most serious problems at AJH. The people who affected and were affected by the school probably were not the root of the problem

BARBI

- her male friend preferred not to hear discussions of school matters and concerns unless the discussion involved something he would consider comical or bizarre
- teacher expectations of student abilities and performance were lower than they would have been at a white school
- teacher behaviors were less professional than they would have been at a white school

CAROL

- community and parents influenced students in ways that impeded effectiveness of teachers
- community rejection of operating levies, the recent teacher cutbacks, and impending court-ordered desegregation influenced teacher lives and the quality of education

DANA

- inter-relationships of students and student behaviors
- friends wanted to hear discussions of school matters and concerns if the discussions involved something comical or bizarre
- students expected and possibly wanted Dana to provide learning centers and additional activities/work-to-do after they completed their regular assignments

PERSONAL CONCERNS

ALICE

- problems with students
- how to have positive influence on student learning and self-esteem
- keeping her position clear and behaving in a manner consistent with her beliefs
- keeping aware of her influence on others and on the realities she experienced
- controlling anxiety
- keeping a positive orientation and realistic perspective, delimiting reasonable areas of responsibility, and keeping aware of what she could and could not change
- sustaining interdependent relationships with others
- being sensitive to others' lifespaces, but still being able to achieve her goals
- who might be her listener next year

BARBI

- students were not learning up to par
- how to get students to "act like they got sense"
- continual frustration
- her negative attitude
- resumption of smoking and frequent headaches
- low motivation to teach business class
- no referent with which to compare her teaching
- feeling disorganized and unable to get herself organized
- questioned her competence
- how to minimize her frustration
- not being firm enough with students
- being nice to kids she does not like; working with "bad kids"
- the observer saw her fail
- questioned whether she should be a teacher

CAROL

- powerlessness of teachers in general and herself to affect their own employment circumstances
- how to confront interpersonal and political situations with other adults in the school
- her ambiguous future as a result of her precarious employment situation
- her precarious emotional state
- her love-hate relationship with the school
- her professional adequacy

DANA

- ineffective as teacher at AJH, i.e. she felt frustrated because the situation made her ineffective
- too much time disciplining
- students don't respect authority; taught not to respect whites at home; students respect black teachers more than whites
- students do not want to learn; students do not value learning
- students do not value improving themselves; students seem satisfied to grow up and live on welfare
- has not fully adjusted to AJH, but has no choice but to return
- how to keep self in a good mood and prevent taking school home with her
- almost nonexistent satisfactions in teaching at AJH
- her attitude toward desegregation would influence how she experienced next year if desegregation would be enforced

PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ALICE

- the beginning of her classes were characterized by order and structure
- she provided alternative learning activities for students
- she had been able to sustain a positive orientation as a result of her relationship with her colleague/friend and the discussions with the investigator
- she had "experimented" and concluded that she should try to foster student trust despite suggestions to the contrary from a black staff member
- has survived and been relatively successful at attaining her goals at AJH

BARBI

- has learned to cope better and experience school better by being less uptight, associating with different staff members, and doing more for and with students
- students generally showed her respect
- got along fairly well with most students and was friendly with several
- responded to students in a way that they were able to feel free to discuss personal matters with her
- had better control this year because students no longer believed her to be naive
- there was order and structure to her typing classes

CAROL

- learned how to cope, thus survived for five years
- finally able to get this year's seventh graders under control (most immature and difficult she ever had to deal with)

DANA

- learned to cope with circumstances and learned how to be a teacher at AJH
- learned how to cope with her emotions
- developed quiet methods of controlling students so that they would respond more to their own inner controls rather than to threats and power
- discovered that students responded to her direction

PERSONAL APPRECIATIONS

ALICE

- fortunate to be at AJH because she felt she was doing what she really valued and wanted in spite of the difficulties
- she was accomplishing what she intended (had structure to her classes, provided alternative learning activities, responded to student feelings and needs)
- her colleague/friend was a source of support and friendship
- the interviews with the investigator were "invaluable" because they allowed her to express and clarify feelings and thoughts

BARBI

- got along fairly well with students
- students generally respected her
- got along well with a group of teachers and administrators

CAROL

- driving for the track team and her relationships with students in general
- being affiliated with the school in spite of the difficulties involved
- seeing students succeed as they became older and left AJH

DANA

- beginning to have good feelings toward students who came daily, especially most of the eighth graders that she had for their two years of junior high experience (she was beginning to see results of her efforts)

ANTICIPATIONS

ALICE

- her need for a listener the following year to replace her colleague/friend (moving out of town) and the investigator
- planning lessons, projects, etc. for next year

BARBI

- would give teaching another trial
- would set firm and clear policy and not let self fall into bad habits, become lax, etc.
- would screen students to get rid of troublemakers and those who appeared unwilling to try next year
- would monitor typing more closely to identify causes of bad typing habits
- wanted to find someone to help her plan a better business curriculum

CAROL

- feared an undesirable future either without teaching position or as a substitute teacher
- acquiring a new teaching position but fearing professional inadequacy
- would need support of an understanding professional if she got a position in a predominantly white school and/or high school

DANA

- would provide learning centers and alternative instructional activities the next year
- hoped for more interaction with students because she would have respect of students and enough control to teach the way she wanted, thus free her to interact with students

CONSEQUENCES

Participation in interviews and observations resulted in several consequences, two of which were identified through data analysis: newly expressed realizations (supra) and direct teacher statements of outcomes. Those in this second category are presented below:

Consequences Identified by Alice

- The observer's presence in the classroom caused Alice to be more aware of her attitudes and behaviors.
- Alice's feelings about her teaching effectiveness were more acute when the observer was present: she felt better when students were doing as she wanted, and worse when they were not.
- The observer's presence enabled Alice to stick to important matters and avoid getting caught up in petty matters.
- The discussions helped Alice "wind down" and "get things in perspective."
- The discussions helped Alice clarify her position and see that her activities were consistent with her beliefs.
- The discussions helped Alice acknowledge her accomplishments, understand that she had handled and thus could handle difficult matters, and that she was doing what she wanted to do.
- Alice "enjoyed" the discussions for they provided opportunities for her to hear herself say positive things; the discussions led to good feelings.
- The discussions helped Alice acquire a realistic perspective on what she "can and cannot do," thus helped her delimit areas of responsibility, acknowledge past and potential accomplishments, and maintain a positive orientation.
- Alice found that it "felt good" and also helped her to know that the investigator appeared to understand and that he had experienced circumstances similar to those she was experiencing.
- Alice's husband, teenage children, and neighbor were relieved of much of the burden of listening to Alice discuss her school experiences and concerns.
- The observations and interviews influenced Alice to reflect more on her teaching, even when she was alone and without a listener. She felt that this increase in reflection provided an internal means for feedback on her teaching.

- Alice became more aware that many factors influence what happens in school.

- Alice became more aware that there was structure and order to her classes, that she liked direct interpersonal contact with students, that she enjoyed the attention she gave students and they gave her ("being the big cheese"), that both she and students benefitted from the way she structured class and interactions, and that she would continue to teach in this manner. She no longer feared her teaching was chaotic and ineffective.

- A question asked by the investigator in one interview led Alice to reflect on her own about the possible influence of a missionary background on her teaching.

- Alice became acutely aware of her need for a positive-oriented person with whom to associate and have as a listener during the next school year since her colleague/friend and the investigator would not be available. Alice planned to identify a person at the school to fulfill this role.

Consequences Identified by Barbi

- Barbi felt uncomfortable during the first few observations, but grew to trust the investigator over the course of the investigation.

- Barbi decided to talk with Dana about their discussions with the investigator. The result was that she felt she and Dana were concerned about the same kinds of things and were on the same wave length.

- Barbi became aware that her attitude toward AJH varied from very negative to positive.

- Barbi felt "like a failure" when the observer saw her students misbehave or refuse to do their assignments.

- Barbi said that finding out that the investigator had had similar experiences and problems helped her to feel better about herself and her situation.

- Barbi said that the investigator's interested listening "felt good."

Consequences Identified by Carol

- Carol felt somewhat nervous about the investigator's presence during the early observations but began to feel better and trust him over the course of the investigation.

- Carol said she appreciated participating in the investigation because it gave her a sense of satisfaction to believe that someone with influence might do something.

- Carol said that her participation in the investigation did not change her outlook on teaching or how she taught.

- Carol learned that she and her students could "function" with an observer in the classroom.

Consequences Identified by Dana

- Dana was nervous during the first few observations, but began to trust the investigator's presence.
- During the observer's presence, Dana's classes were more quiet and calm. This enabled her to see that students knew how to act and did not have to embarrass her.
- Dana felt that her input in the discussions became repetitious after the first interview, thus did not eagerly anticipate several interviews.
- Dana said that "it was good to have another person to let off steam and feelings to."
- Dana was disappointed that her discussions were not with someone "who could do something" about her situation.
- Dana acknowledged that her attitude change over the two years at AJH had been considerable.
- It helped Dana to realize that the investigator and others had similar experiences and that everyone sometimes feels negative about his/her situation.
- Dana developed a better attitude toward AJH and was interested in returning in the fall.
- Dana became aware that all her efforts were not fruitless, that some bore fruit.
- Dana acknowledged that she had gained more control of herself and her students.
- Dana became aware that students did respond to her and that she did have control.
- Dana felt more confident.
- Dana became aware that students wanted her to provide learning centers and activities to do when they completed their regular assignments. That is, students wanted her to do the things that she was upset about not being able to do.
- Dana felt she was not influenced by the investigation process.

Themes from Teacher Discussions

Several themes emerged from teacher discussions. These fit into the following descriptors:

- understanding and coping with cultural differences
- relationships with professional staff members
- impending court decisions on desegreation
- teacher beliefs about indicators of teaching success
- teacher beliefs that the AJH staff behaved less professionally and had lower regard for students than other school staffs
- teacher beliefs relative to positive or desirable student characteristics
- teachers' favorite students
- teacher beliefs relative to possible ways to manipulate students
- teacher beliefs that teacher characteristics such as race, sex, and/or size influenced student behavior
- teacher beliefs that particular times of the school year and the weather affect how students and teachers felt and behaved, as well as the quality of their performance
- teacher beliefs on how to construct a positive and realistic image of self-as-teacher
- teacher beliefs that friendship with a colleague can be important
- teacher beliefs that their teacher education programs were inappropriate or inadequate, therefore caused them to fail and to develop low self-esteem as teachers
- teacher recommendations for teacher education.

Themes from Investigator Reflections Recorded in Fieldnotes and Journal

The investigator described observations in fieldnotes and reported his personal inferences and feelings in a journal. Several themes emerged and were placed under these descriptors:

- teacher hesitancy to review tapes, transcipts and fieldnotes
- investigator awareness of teacher sensitivty to his presence
- investigator awareness of teachers' judgments of his credibility
- teacher desire that investigator form an acceptable image of teacher as person
- investigator sensitivity to the possible effects of his internal feelings and judgments

- investigator desire to inform teachers of patterns he observed in their teaching, and knew that the teachers valued but had not acknowledged
- teachers cautiously accepted, then valued investigator feedback on patterns he observed in their teaching
- investigator discomfort with observing but not being able to do anything about misunderstandings that occurred between teachers and students
- investigator discomfort with teacher silence in interviews
- investigator discomfort with teacher discussions that represented views or feelings he did not value nor want to accept
- investigator empathy with teacher frustrations evident in class or expressed in interviews
- interviews and observations caused investigator to spend much emotional energy
- investigator re-visited his teaching experience

FINDINGS

Ten findings are presented below. These represent, but do not exhaust, the possible findings available in the data.

Confidant Reationships Provide a Feasible Means for Facilitating Teacher Development

Teachers discussed personal concerns of professional matters under conditions similar to those involved in counseling relationships. Moderately high and moderately increasing self-disclosure by three of the four teachers indicated that teachers self-disclosed on professional matters. It is concluded, therefore, that teachers and another educator can achieve confidant relationships.

Newly expressed realizations and consequences were identified as having ensued within the context of the investigation. The investigator inferred that these were generally supportive of personal and/or professional development. Three of the four teachers stated that the discussions were worthwhile because they were able to "get things off our chests" and

to see that they actually were doing some of the things that they wanted to do. The fourth teacher did not state positive or negative feelings or judgments about the discussions. However, her general talkativeness and eagerness to participate in interviews indicated that she found the sessions interesting. Thus, it is concluded that teacher discussions of personal experiences and concerns about teaching can be worthwhile and can contribute to teacher development.

Moderate and increasing self-disclosure on professional matters and the fact that such disclosure in the presence of another educator appears to be worthwhile for the teachers indicated that confidant relationships can provide a feasible means for facilitating teacher development.

Differences Among Teachers Contribute to Differences in the Substance and Outcomes of Teacher Discussions

It was evident that there was considerable variability among teachers regarding degree of self-disclosure, the substance and meanings of discussions, newly expressed realizations, and consequences.

Teachers had different assumptions and beliefs about teaching. And, in spite of investigator efforts to the contrary, teachers developed different beliefs about the purpose of the discussions. However, the most important differences appeared to have been those involving assumptions and beliefs about teaching and self-as-teacher. These differences contributed to variability in the meanings involved in consequences derived from teacher discussions.

Teacher assumptions and beliefs appeared to have been influenced by personalogical, ecological and relationship factors. In turn, these factors appeared to have two dimensions: historical/cultural and immediate. It was assumed that these factors influenced teacher understandings, and

therefore, influenced the meanings teachers constructed in and from teacher discussions. However, the assumption about the influence of these factors on variability requires further study.

High Self-Disclosers Were More Consistent Self-Disclosers

Teachers with high self-disclosure means showed less variability in self-disclosure than the lower disclosers. Higher disclosing teachers showed more consistency in self-disclosure throughout the investigation. However, the size of the sample makes it imperative to suggest further study of this phenomenon.

Teachers Showed A Common Pattern of Variability of Self-Disclosure Scores

The data revealed a common pattern in the variability of teacher self-disclosure. Teacher self-disclosure scores were relatively high for the first and fifth interviews and lower in all others. Three factors appeared singly or in some combination to have influenced this pattern of variability:

- circumstances at the school influenced teachers similarly; therefore, they tended to disclose similarly
- the investigator's (confidant) participation in the interviews influenced teachers similarly (the investigator had more questions prepared and participated in a more direct manner in the first and fifth interviews, and was more assertive in initiating topics than in the other interviews)
- the teachers were similar in their approaches to self—disclosure; that is, they disclosed much in the first interview, then cautiously approached subsequent discussions in order to assure themselves that the investigator would respond appropriately to their disclosures. By the fifth interview, they again were ready to disclose more.

Further study is suggested. The purpose would be to determine whether this pattern becomes apparent among the general population of teachers and, if so, to describe how it is constructed within the confidant relationship context.

Multiple Concerns Influenced Teachers' Professional Performance and Personal Lives

Teachers expressed numerous concerns. Among these were: understanding and coping with cultural differences, staff relationships, classroom management (control), impending court decisions on desegregation, and the school district's policy regarding staff reduction. The teachers believed that these concerns affected their teaching performance and how they felt about themselves. They also believed these concerns had negative impacts on their families and/or social lives. They felt that their school experiences influenced their attitudes which, in turn, influenced how they prepared for and experienced subsequent school or teaching events. Teacher reactions to most school days were generally negative. Negative feelings generated at school carried over to family and/or social settings.

It is concluded, therefore, that multiple concerns can influence teachers' professional and personal experience and the quality of their professional performance.

Teachers Felt That Usual In-School and Out-of-School Conditions Prevented Desirable Discussion of Teaching Experiences and Concerns

The teachers felt that they had few opportunities, under usual conditions, to discuss their teaching experiences and concerns. They felt that other teachers tended to gossip or "bitch," seemingly unwilling or unable to listen and be helpful. One teacher, who formed a confidant-like relationship with a colleague, valued the relationship much, but sensed that this relationship was an exception to the norm. Family members tended to prefer that teachers leave their troubles at school. Friends, too, preferred not to hear about teaching, unless the stories "made them laugh."

Therefore, it can be concluded that most teachers seem

to have insufficient and/or inappropriate opportunities to discuss teaching experiences and concerns.

The Presence of an Observer in a Teacher's Classroom Can Enhance the Teacher's Capacity for Reflection on Teaching

The four teachers stated that there had been few observers in their classrooms. Although they were initially uncomfortable with the investigator's presence, they adjusted rather quickly. However, the teachers felt unsure of how well they were doing. When the investigator identified areas where they were performing in accordance with their assumptions about teaching, the teachers appeared to become more comfortable. They then were able to reflect on their classroom experiences with less defensiveness than before. One teacher in particular spoke frequently about how the observations enabled her to "keep track of" what she was doing, thus helped her to see successes and problems. Thus, the data suggest that, once teachers become comfortable with an observer's presence, observations can enhance teachers' reflections on teaching experiences.

Feedback on Observations Can Be Useful

Teachers responded cautiously to investigator feedback on classroom observations. The investigator described phenomena that he observed and believed the teacher valued. For example, one teacher felt the beginning of her class was generally chaotic. The investigator informed her that he saw a particular pattern at the beginning of each class. He felt sure that she valued but had not acknowledged this pattern in her teaching. Several days passed before the teacher noted that she also observed the pattern, and several more days before she accepted and valued the pattern's presence. Subsequently, the teacher said that she would continue beginning her classes

in the same manner because she was doing the kinds of things that she felt were important to the students and to her. This kind of feedback -- honest and geared to teacher assumptions and values about teaching -- enabled the teachers to clarify experience, to perceive accomplishments, and to feel better about their teaching. It seems, therefore, that persons who observe teachers can have a positive impact on teachers' development if they provide feedback to teachers on phenomena that teachers might value and that actually exist in their teaching.

Testing the Investigator's Credibility

The teachers observed the investigator while he was in the school. They looked for evidence of his rapport with students and other teachers. They listened to what he said and observed how he used information that he acquired in interviews and classroom observations; they did this in order to assess his trustworthiness. Teachers observed how the investigator participated in interviews, making assessments on his interest in their discussions and his feelings about their concerns. The data from this study suggest, therefore, that a person taking the role of confidant might attend to means for demonstrating his or her credibility as an educator and as a trusted listener.

The Experiences of the Investigator

The investigator experienced several concerns relative to the definition of his role and his confidence in performing the role. One involved explaining his presence to teachers not involved in the study. Another was not becoming involved in classroom activities. This was especially difficult when he observed misunderstandings about to occur between students and teacher. Further, it was difficult to listen to and accept many statements of teacher

assumptions and beliefs and their expressions of frustrations. Thus, it appears that performance of the staff developer role can involve the personal difficulties of making congruent the staff developer's nature and tendencies with role requirements.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The data suggest several implications relative to the practice of staff development: teacher development implications; school development implications; and implications for development of a professional capacity for influencing staff development.

Teacher Development

The data suggest three areas of attention for persons interested in facilitating the personal and professional development of teachers:

1. Persons who are responsible for contributing to teacher development might acknowledge and respond to individual differences among teachers. It appears that there are substantial differences among teachers'

   - assumptions and beliefs relative to teaching
   - teaching situations (subject matter, students, grade level, etc.)
   - professional experiences
   - concerns about personal and professional matters
   - tendencies to self-disclose in discussions about professional matters.

   It is reasonable to believe that these differences influence how teachers participate in teacher development activities. Further, the consequences appear to differ for teachers who participate in these activities.

2. School districts and/or professional organizations might provide opportunities for teachers to have contacts and discussions with other educators. Open discussions of professional matters appear to facilitate teacher development; "bitching" sessions appear unhelpful to teacher development.

Discussions with other educators could:

- permit expression of experiences and concerns, thus provide for a cathartic effect
- enhance reflection on teaching experiences and concerns in light of personal assumptions and beliefs about teaching
- enable clarification of experience and concerns, and allow identification of accomplishments and problems
- reduce teacher ambiguity relative to actual performance and teaching goals
- enhance image and esteem for self-as-teacher
- enhance problem finding and problem solving ability

3. Individual teachers might be provided feedback on their behaviors or other activities and patterns that occur in the classroom. Initially, feedback would be on phenomena that are consistent or congruent with the teacher's assumptions and concerns about teaching. The purpose would be to enable the teacher to perceive phenomena that previously were unacknowledged. Once the teacher gains more confidence in his or her ability and begins to trust and value the staff developer's assistance, feedback can be given on other phenomena in the classroom.

School Development

Staff development personnel might attend to the mutual relationship between school development and teacher development. A teacher's personal and professional development is influenced by extant school sociocultural and organizational factors. Likewise, the school's development is influenced by the collective development of individual teachers. Planners of staff development might engage in continuous review of changes in the school that result from teachers' development. They might also plan ways to influence teacher development in a manner congruent with the development goals of the school and the individual teacher's strengths and preferences. While avenues must be opened for the individual teacher's expressions of idiosyncratic nature and creative potential, so, too, must

avenues be cleared for the development of the school as an organization that is intended to deliver quality instruction and positive socioemotional climates. Teacher development and school development can be a mutual process.

Development of a Capacity for Influencing Staff Development

The capacity for influencing staff development depends on the interpersonal and professional understandings and skills of staff developers, and on the professional knowledge base and technology of the staff development profession. This study suggests three areas of concern relative to improvement of staff development capacity.

1. It appears important that staff developers try to understand individual teachers' assumptions and concerns about teaching. It seems equally important for the staff developer to have a clear view of the role, however flexible, that he or she expects the teacher to perform. The staff developer is the person who supports individual teachers' efforts in achieving congruence between school role and his or her idiosyncratic nature and creative potential. This goal and process are both immediate and continuous.

   The following are understandings and abilities that a staff developer might acquire in order to enhance his or her role effectiveness:

   - understandings of the experience of teaching -- what it means to be a teacher
   - understandings of the sociocultural and organizational climate and activities of a school
   - understandings of the teacher's teaching situation and his or her view of the situation
   - ability to enable teachers to engage in candid discussions of teaching experiences and concerns
   - ability for providing candid feedback on observations, but with a sensitivity to the teacher's beliefs and emotional state; i.e., an ability to provide information that can be understood and accepted unimpeded by teacher defensiveness

- ability to engage in continuous reflection on his or her work with teachers in order to understand better how he or she relates to teachers and how they relate to him or her as staff developer.

2. The staff developer, like the teacher, is involved in intense interpersonal transactions. Thus, a staff developer might want to make a commitment to his or her own personal and professional renewal, and might build access routes to persons who will support him or her.

3. The staff developer might benefit from professional preparation in:

   - the professional knowledge base and technology of education with special emphasis on teacher education
   - change theory and research
   - sociocultural theory and research
   - organizational theory and research
   - theory and research on adult development and counseling.

4. If there is to be a viable field of staff development -- as is implied throughout this study -- then professionals working in this field might benefit from increased attention to these five areas of development:

   - teacher development -- the personal and professional development of teachers
   - school development -- the development of the instructional capability and the socioemotional climate of schools
   - development of the teaching profession -- the development of a professional knowledge base and technology specific to teaching
   - development of a profession of school staff development -- the development of a knowledge base and technology specific to processes involved in the mutual development of teachers and schools
   - development of staff developers -- the personal and professional development of staff developers.

RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

A tentative conclusion of this study is that it is feasible to employ confidant relationships to facilitate teacher development. However, further study is recommended in three areas: teacher development; school development;

and development of a capacity for influencing staff development.

Teacher Development

It is recommended that studies be done on the use of confidant relationships for teacher development. These studies could be of two types:

1. descriptive studies. These would include descriptions of persons, processes, meanings, and consequences involved in confidant approaches to teacher development. The purposes would be to describe how confidant relationships are constructed and to describe the value and outcomes that participants attribute to the relationships.

2. experimental studies. These would be designed to test the feasibility of confidant approaches to teacher development.

School Development

This study was focused on teacher development, not on confidant approaches to school development. It is recommended that descriptive and experimental studies be conducted on confidant relationships as part of broader school development strategies.

1. descriptive studies. These studies might be ethnographic and might describe how confidant relationships contribute to overall school development. The purpose would be to describe the mutual development of teachers and school.

2. experimental studies. These studies might be designed to test the feasibility of confidant relationships as strategies for school development. The influences of confidant relationships on such things as the quality of instruction and socioemotional climate might be considered.

Development of a Capacity for Influencing Staff Development

There is not much staff development literature on the actual performances and experiences of staff developers. Most of the literature consists of theories or grandiose plans or "this is what we did in Z-town." It is recommended, therefore, that studies be done on the role performances

and experiences of real staff developers, and that these become part of the professional knowledge base of school staff development.

1. ethnographic studies. It is recommended that these studies involve intensive observations and interviews of staff development personnel over periods of one to two years. The purpose would be to describe processes and meanings involved in performance of staff development roles.

2. phenomenological studies. It is recommended that staff developers record personal experiences involved in professional role performance throughout their careers. There are two purposes for this recommendation:

   - By keeping a journal, the staff developer might be able to reflect on his or her experiences in working with teachers. In turn, this might contribute to the staff developer's development.

   - Staff developers might report their experiences. These experiences could then become part of the professional knowledge base (understandings) of school staff development.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Teachers appear to benefit from contacts and discussions with other educators. Staff development addresses teacher development and school development. Confidant approaches to staff development would enable teachers to have contacts and discussions with other educators. Confidant approaches also might help teachers clarify their concerns. And having clarified their perspectives and concerns, teachers might be able to make congruent their personal natures with their professional roles.

The staff developer, too, has concerns and problems in integrating his or her way of being with the professional role. Staff development practice and research would benefit from more attention to the role and experience of staff developers, in addition to the attention given to teacher development and school development.

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